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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature focuses on the sexual knowledge of handicapped and nonhandicapped adolescents and young adults. Results of studies are cited which show lack of conceptual information among physically handicapped, learning disabled, educable mentally retarded, and emotionally disturbed young people. Further, data are reported on the inadequate training many special education teachers receive regarding sex education training. Conclusions drawn include the need for systematic instruction in sexuality as part of the handicapped student's total education. Instructional approaches are recommended, including the use of multisensory strategies, concrete teaching, and reinforcement from peers. Annotated lists of approximately 20 sexuality books for parents and professionals and approximately 25 books for children and young adults about sexuality conclude the document. (CL)

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SEXUALITY AND THE HANDICAPPED

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Sexuality is as important an aspect of life for handicapped individuals as it is for other individuals. In the past, society viewed procreation and sexuality among handicapped individuals negatively--using legal, medical, psychological, and other means to thwart the consequences of sexuality.

Today, federal and state laws mandate a "free and appropriate public education" to handicapped children in the "least restrictive environment" (Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, 1975). Public education institutions have become increasingly aware of the need to provide appropriate special education and related services to handicapped children, but such instructions and services have not always included information on sexuality. For handicapped children, the opportunity to acquire appropriate knowledge about sexuality is as important as other opportunities within the curriculum.

There is practically little or no nationwide research that has evaluated a meaningful study regarding the extent of pregnancy and sexual activity specifically among handicapped children and young adults. In trying to prepare this paper, it became painfully aware of how inadequate our knowledge is of sexuality issues

concerning handicapped children. Recently, The Alan Guttmacher Institute (1981) described the extent of pregnancy among the general population of youth in our nation. Statistics presented described teenage mothers according to their marital status, age, and race--not by the prescence of a handicapping condition.

The need for sexuality instruction among all youth is evidenced by available statistics which address the increasing numbers of sexually active youths--at least 41% of the 29 million youths between the ages of 13 to 19 years (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981). Zelnick and Kantner (1980) presented data which showed an increase in sexually experienced 15 to 19 year old females from 30% in 1971, 43% in 1976, to 50% in 1979. Teenagers are becoming sexually active at younger ages and are at earlier risk of pregnancy--during 1978, 1,142,000 young females under 19 years of age conceived.

Over 50% of pregnancies among married and unmarried teenagers were unplanned. Better use of contraceptives substantially reduced the numbers of unintentional births among teenagers. Yet, among students aged 13 to 18 years, only 43% reported receiving any kind of sex education in

school--and even less were taught about contraception.

Sexuality Information and the Handicapped

Investigative efforts also identify deficiencies in handicapped children's sexual knowledge and understanding. As an example, Dorner (1977) interviewed 13 to 19 year old physically handicapped youths and found that 80% acknowledged interest in the opposite sex. Seventy-seven percent could explain the process of conception, but few could describe pregnancy prevention. In another example, Fisher and Krajick (1974) used pictures to evaluate information on sex roles, body function, menstruation, pregnancy, procreation, and other sexuality related issues possessed by 10 to 17 year old educable mentally impaired individuals. Fifty percent of this group of children knew the appropriate vocabulary words to describe the picture, but lacked the conceptual understanding of the terminology they used in the description.

Rothenberg, Franzblau and Greer (1979) also found handicapped children to possess incomplete understanding of menstruation, reproduction, contraception, and pregnancy. Using structured interviews, the sexual knowledge and experience of 13 Learning Disabled youths between the ages of 16 and 22 years was assessed--with 50% of that group showing inadequate levels of information.

Beckman, Johnston and Beckman (1979), using interview techniques, measured the sexual knowledge of 6 to 18 year old emotionally disturbed children in a residential setting. Data obtained from the children indicated the presence of misinformation about the physiology of sex, as well as unhealthy sexual attitudes. Written questionnaires to evaluate sexual behavior, sex roles, and the physiology of sex were also administered to the junior and senior high students. Results confirmed the interview findings of inadequate sexual information and knowledge. Despite the type of disability, there emerges in these studies a picture of inadequate sexual information among the children involved.

Sexuality Instructions and the Special Educator

Researchers indicate that not only do handicapped children have minimal information on sexuality, but special education teachers are inadequately trained to assist these students in addressing relevant issues. Fitz-Gerald, Fitz-Gerald, and Williams (1978) conducted a survey of teacher training programs for the deaf to determine if sex education training courses were offered for teachers. Telephone interviews with 71 teacher training programs for the deaf across the nation

indicated that only 3% offered a specific sex education training course. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that such training was offered within their programs but through a different course, and 43% offered sex education through a different department within the university system.

In another study, May (1980) examined the sex education component of teacher preparation institutions, and identified defciencies. Mail surveys were sent to 185 special education departments, of which 78.9% responded. None of the departments required students to take a sex education course, however, 4% offered such a course as an elective, 78% offered instructions through other courses, and 13% indicated that sex education was offered by other departments within their university structure.

Recommendations and Conclusions

To meet the challenge of providing an appropriate education to handicapped children, it is imperative to recognize that sexuality needs are an important focus of curricular attention. As growing and developing organisms, handicapped children and youth require an instructional emphasis which provides optimal nutrients to their total

development. To assist these children in developing to the limits of their potential, requires a scrutiny of the quality of their life as a totality. Such a wholistic approach to the education of handicapped children would direct equal emphasis to sexuality needs as to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Through solid implementation of this principle, unity and continuity of all aspects of the child's growth can be encouraged and achieved.

Systematic instruction in sexuality assists handicapped children in developing an awareness and understanding of their sexual feelings, and enables them to develop comfortably as sexual beings. As with any area of the curriculum, a sequential and comprehensive program of instruction, adapted to the disability and developmental level of children, should be available. Instruction should begin during the early childhood years and become increasingly complex as children mature. Although additional research is needed on specific topics and the timing of their presentation, reproductive physiology, health and hygiene, personal responsibility, and the social/cultural context of sexuality should be covered in the instructional process.

Sexuality instructions requires an extremely specific programmatic emphasis. Through the topic of reproductive

physiology, handicapped youths are provided with biological and scientific information on how reproduction occurs and life begins. Knowledge about physical and emotional sexual development, the care and hygiene of the body, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases is available through health and hygiene. An appreciation, concern and respect for life and reproduction of life is promoted within the subject of personal responsibility. Through social/cultural context of sexuality, children learn the importance of social behavior that corresponds with moral and ethical values of society, and become aware of physical, psychological, and social consequences of actions which are not consistent with established norms.

There are a number of teaching strategies and instructional materials which might be considered by educators in addressing the sexuality needs of handicapped children and youth. Instructional techniques should involve multisensory approaches, concrete teaching, reinforcement from peers, and opportunities for social interaction. An understanding and acceptance of the handicapped as sexual beings must be reflected in the curriculum in order to facilitate children's growth and development. The availability of appropriate curriculum

materials and resources is a critical element in the teaching process. Numerous books, multi-media resources, games, and children materials on sexuality are currently available. These items must be researched to develop a format and materials which are appropriate and effective with the student population served. This article concludes with an annotated list of a variety of materials and resources on sex education which are appropriate for use with handicapped children. Through the use of these items, it is anticipated that the needs of such children for sexuality information can be better served. It is recommended that items selected from the list be previewed prior to use, and adapted to meet the specific needs of the particular group.

Sexuality Books for Parents and Professionals

Amary, I. Social Awareness, Hygiene and Sex Education for the Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1980.

A description of a sex education curriculum for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled individuals. Discussion of sexuality related issues is included, as well as a questionnaire designed to assess the student's level of sexual awareness.

Bernstein, A. The Flight of the Stork. New York: Delacorte Press, 1978.

Describes a study conducted at the University of California-Berkley to determine what children, at certain developmental levels, understood about the origins of babies.

Burt, J. and Brower, L. Education for Sexuality; Concepts and Programs for Teaching. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1970.

A collection of information on human sexuality designed as a textbook for teacher trainers. Provides a suggested sex education curriculum for elementary through high school grade levels.

Campbell, P. Sex Education Books Written for Young Adults: 1872-1979. New York: Boulker, 1979.

Contains a survey of sex education books, and an annotated guide to current and recommended titles.

Conceptions and Misconceptions: Sexuality in Children's Books. Oakland, California: Association of Children's Librarians of Northern California, 1978.

A listing of recommended and not recommended fiction and nonfiction titles for grades preschool and above. Subjects of publications include reproduction, puberty, sexual identity, sexuality, and relations dealing with sexual tensions.

Concerns of Parents about Sex Education: Study Guide #13. Sex Information and Education Council of the United States. New York: Human Science Press, 1971.

Identifies and describes some of the common dilemmas experienced by parents as they educate their children about human sexuality.

Gordon, S. The Sexual Adolescent: Communicating with Teenagers. North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1973.

Discusses issues related to adolescent sexuality and pregnancy. Contains an annotated list of selected resources.

Haims, L. Sex Education and the Public Schools: a Multidimensional Study for the 1970's. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1973.

Analysis of the nature and significance of social changes which occurred during the 1970's, and their effect on programs in sex education.

Hopper, C. Sex Education for Physically Handicapped Youth. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1980.

Designed as a resource to assist parents and other family members in answering the handicapped child's questions about sex related issues.

Hottois, J. and Milner, N. The Sex Education Controversy: a Study of Politics, Education and Morality. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1975.

Describes a study of sex education programs across the nation through data obtained from school officials and teachers.

Human Sexuality: Books for Everyone. Sex Information and Education Council of the United States. New York: Human Science Press, 1976.

Selected list of books dealing with sexuality.

Johnson, W. Sex Education and Counseling of Special Groups: The Mentally and Physically Handicapped, Ill and Elderly. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Pub., 1975.

Discusses sex related topics and their application to special groups.

McCary, J. A Complete Sex Education: for Parents, Teenagers, and Young Adults. New York: VanNostrand Reinhold Co., 1973.

Overview of sexuality related issues with text designed for youth and parents. Discusses conception, fertilization, sexual diseases, and other sex related issues.

Mitchell, M. The Counselor and Sexuality. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973.

Describes the counselor's involvement in programs of counseling and education for human sexuality. Contains a bibliography of suggested resources.

Otto, H., ed. The New Sex Education: the Sex Educator's Resource Book. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1978.

A collection of articles which discuss the teaching of sex education in grades kindergarten through college.

Pomeroy, W. Your Child and Sex: a Guide for Parents. New York: Delacorte Press, 1974.

Discusses sexuality related issues, and is designed to assist parents in communicating information to their children.

Robinsault, I. Sex, Society, and the Disabled: a Developmental Inquiry into Roles, Reactions, and Responsibilities. New York: Harper, & Row Pub., 1978.

Discusses sexuality from a developmental perspective from infancy through the elderly. Similiarities in experiences between the disabled and the able-bodied are emphasized.

Schiller, P. Creative Approaches to Sex Education and Counseling. New York: Associated Press, 1973.

Describes the historical stages in the sex education movement in the United States; techniques to utilize in teaching about sex; model training programs for all ages; sex education curricula; a resource list of books; and includes a sex attitude inventory.

Selzer, J. When Children Ask About Sex: a Guide for Parents. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974.

Discusses children's questions about sex according to developmental stages.

Sex Education for Adolescents: a Bibliography of Low-Cost Materials. Chicago: American Library Association, 1980.

Annotated list of publications on a number of sexuality related issues of interests to adolescents. Books on contraception, sexuality, general information on adolescents, and special interest subjects are included.

Sex Education for Retarded Students: Fact Sheet. ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children. 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia.

A concise description of selected issues related to sex education for retarded students. Concludes with an abbreviated list of resources and materials.

Children's Books About Sexuality

Primary (pre-school to fourth grade level)

Bendick, J. What Made You You? New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970.

Using poetic language and pictures appropriate to children, the process of conception and childbirth is described.

Clifton, L. Everett Anderson's Nine Month Long. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

A sequel to the Everett Anderson stories that describes his thoughts as he awaits the birth of the baby.

Cole, J. My Puppy is Born. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1973.

The birth of several puppies and the early days of their lives is described through still photographs.

Dragonwagon, D. Wind Rose. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

A mother details how she felt and planned while awaiting her daughter's birth.

Gordon, S. and Gordon, J. Did the Sun Shine Before You Were Born? New York: An Odarkai Book, 1974.

Designed to be used to help parents communicate facts about sexuality to their children.

May, J. A New Baby Comes. Minnesota: Creative Educational Society, Inc., 1970.

Describes the process of reproduction from conception through childbirth.

Portals, C. The Beauty of Birth. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Through the use of water color illustrations and simple text, a description of the reproductive process is provided.

Sheffield, M. Where Do Babies Come From? New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

Using simple test, an explanation of conception, pregnancy, and the process of giving birth is detailed.

Stein, B. Making Babies: an Open Family Book for Parents and Children Together. New York: Walker and Co., 1974.

Contains separate texts for the adult and the child. Describes conception, development, and birth using still photographs.

Intermediate (fourth through ninth grade levels)

Ahos, J. and Petras, J. Learning About Sex: a Guide for Children and their Parents. New York: Holt, Rinehart

and Winston, 1978.

Describes male and female reproductive anatomy, puberty, pregnancy, child birth and venereal diseases. Children's text is preceded by information on the subject for parents.

Cole, J. and Edmondson, M. Twins: The Story of Multiple Births. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1972.

Describes the prenatal development of identical and fraternal twins from egg to baby. Covers historical research on twins, and what it is like to grow up as a twin.

Elgin, K. and Osterriter, M. Twenty-Eight Days. New York: David McKay Co., 1973.

Simple and comprehensive description of the menstrual cycle.

Johnson, E. and Johnson, C. Love and Sex and Growing Up. New York: Lippincott, 1977.

Describes reproduction, sexuality, puberty, and growing up.

Voelckers, E. Girls Guide to Menstruation. New York: Richard Rosen Press, Inc., 1975.

Information on menstrual cycle, reproduction, male and female anatomy, pelvic exams, and children's comments concerning menstruation.

Young Adult (tenth grade level and above)

Bell, R. Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: a Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships. New York: Random House, 1980.

Through interviews with teenagers, descriptions of body development and sex is presented.

Gordon, S. Facts About Sex for Today's Youth. Rev. Ed. New York: The John Day Co., 1973.

Describes the male and female sexual anatomy, human reproduction, love, sex problems, and answers the 10 most common questions young people ask about sex.

Gordon, S. and Consant, R. Ten Heavy Facts About Sex. New York: Ed-U-Press, undated.

In comic book format, basic facts about sex are presented.

Hamilton, E. Sex with Love: a Guide for Young People. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

Discussion of puberty, male and female roles and attitudes, birth control, childbirth, venereal disease, and misconceptions regarding sex.

Hunt, M. What is a Man? What is a Woman? 1st Ed. New York: Farrer/Strauss/Girouy, 1979.

Discusses physical and social aspects of sex, examines conflicts over sex roles brought about by changing values in society.

Johnson, E. Love and Sex in Plain Language. New Rev. Ed. New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1973.

A description of male and female reproductive organs and their functions, sexual intercourse, fertilization, childbirth, family planning, and venereal disease.

Johnson, E. Sex Telling It Straight. New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1977.

Details the process of reproduction from conception to childbirth, family planning, and venereal disease.

Kaplan, H. Making Sense of Sex: the New Facts About Sex and Love for Young People. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.

Provides information on reproduction, the biology of sex, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Kelly, G. Learning about Sex: the Contemporary Guide for Young Adults. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1977.

The social, psychological, biological and interpersonal facets of human sexuality are described. Cited as one of the best books for young adults by the American Library Association in 1978.

Kohn-Burgess, J. Straight Talk about Love and Sex for Teenagers. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.

Question and answer format is used to provide information on sex, decision-making, marriage, and family planning.

Mintz, T. and Mintz, L. Threshold: Straight Forward Answers to Teenagers Questions About Sex. New York: Walker, 1978.

Discusses frequently asked questions about puberty, sexual development, pregnancy, childbirth, contraception, venereal disease, and emotions.

Nourse, A. Menstruation: Just Plain Talk. New York: Franklin Watts, 1980.

Describes the menstrual process, including normalities and abnormalities associated with the menstrual cycle.

Whelan, E. Sex and Sensibility: a New Look at Being a Woman. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.

A discussion directed at the teenage woman, of human love and sexuality, menstruation, reproduction, male anatomy, family planning, and stressing the need for responsible behavior.

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Dorner, S. Sexual Interest and Activity in Adolescents with Spinal Bifida. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. 18(August 1977), 229-237.

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Fisher, H. and Krajick, M. Sexual Development in the Child: Level of Information and Parental Attitude. Mental Retardation. 12(1974), 28-30.

Fitz-Gerald, D., Fitz-Gerald, M. and Williams, C. The Sex Educator: Who's Teaching the Teacher Sex Education? American Annuals for the Deaf. 123(February 1978), 68-72.

May, D. Survey of Sex Education Coursework in Special Education Programs. Journal of Special Education. 14(Spring 1980), 107-111.

Rothenberg, G., Franzblau, S. and Geer, J. Educating the Learning Disabled Adolescent About Sexuality. Journal of Learning Disability. 12(November 1979), 10-14.

Zelnick, M. and Kantner, J. Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan-Area Teenagers. Family Planning Perspective. 12(October 1980), 230-237.